The Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project

What Options Are No Longer Being Considered?

The tunnel and elevated structure were chosen out of an original list of 76 concepts.

Here's a sampling of ideas that have been evaluated and screened out for safety, cost, or structural reasons:

Repair or 'retrofit' the existing viaduct

- Make a series of repairs to the existing structure while keeping it open to traffic.
- WSDOT and the City of Seattle studied this option for over five years to see if it could work.

What are some of the issues?

- The viaduct is in such poor shape that the structure's foundations, columns, joints, deck and bridge rail would all need to be reconstructed, expanded, or replaced.
- With all those repairs, the viaduct still won't be safe in an earthquake.
- It's not cost-effective. This band-aid approach costs 85-90 percent of what it would cost to replace the entire structure, and it would only last 35-50 years. A new structure would be designed to last 75-100 years.

Note: The latest retrofit proposal is being reviewed by an independent firm and panel

No replacement concept

- Also known as the 'no build,' this option would tear down the viaduct and provide no replacement.
- Transit and local street improvements are expected to make up for the lost capacity.

What are some of the issues?

- The 110,000 vehicles that currently use the viaduct each day can't be moved to Interstate 5 and surface streets without severe congestion. Capacity is needed to support freight movement and the Port of Seattle, and to accommodate future expected growth in the region.
- If the viaduct was not replaced, traffic along Alaskan Way would more than quadruple and congestion would last most of the day.

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Tunnel under Western Avenue:

- Construct a tunnel under Western Avenue, closer to downtown than the current tunnel design plans.

What are some of the issues?

- Western Avenue is too narrow. In order to meet traffic safety standards, the design only allows for a 30 mph speed limit.
- The right-of-way available within Western Avenue is about a third of that available on the waterfront.
- Too many businesses and residents are unnecessarily displaced. Up to 13 buildings, including four historic buildings, would have to be removed to create a safe traffic corridor.

Elliott Bay Bridge

- Build a six-lane, cable-stay bridge that would stretch two miles across Elliott Bay from South Holgate Street to the Battery Street Tunnel.

What are some of the issues?

- The foundations alone would be the equivalent of two 60-story buildings underwater. This would be extremely difficult to permit.
- This plan would unnecessarily displace residents and businesses; encroach into port, railroad, and other existing land uses; and would disrupt navigation of container ships, cruise ships, ferries, and airplanes.

Bored tunnels

- Replace the viaduct with twin bored, or drilled, tunnels under the existing Alaskan Way surface street, Elliott Bay, or downtown.

What are some of the issues?

- A bored tunnel, because of topography, would extend from the stadiums to Seattle Center. With over one third of the trips using the Elliott and Western ramps, additional tunneling for those on- and off-ramps would be needed.
- To construct this kind of tunnel, the cost estimates are between $8 and $12 billion, and that doesn't include fixing the seawall or relocating the utilities.